Claims

[c1]   1. A video recorder system, comprising: at least a first and second video recorder configured to utilize a broadcast signal each of said video recorders having one or more tuners; a network connecting said first and second video recorders; and a conflict manager associated with said first video recorder configured to determine when all of said one or more tuners in said first video recorder are unavailable and to use said network to access a connected tuner in said second video recorder if said connected tuner is available.

[c2]   2. The video recorder system of claim 1 wherein said first and second video recorders further comprise: an input mechanism configured to receive said broadcast signal; a storage device configured to store said broadcast signal; an output mechanism configured to display said broadcast signal by obtaining said broadcast signal from said storage device; and a transfer mechanism configured to obtain a portion of said broadcast signal at an appropriate time, if possible, and to transfer said portion of said broadcast signal to said storage device based on a user input.

[c3]   3. The video recorder of claim 2 wherein said conflict manager determines when said transfer mechanism will be unable to obtain said portion of said broadcast signal by determining when a total number of tuners in said first video recorder is less than a number of shows needed to be used by said total number of tuners to obtain said portion of said broadcast signal.

[c4]   4. The video recorder of claim 3 wherein said conflict manager further establishes a priority associated with each of one or more shows, and instructs said transfer mechanism to transfer to said storage device as many of said one or more shows as possible which have a highest priority.

[c5]   5. The video recorder of claim 4 wherein said priority is established by determining if a first show of said one or more shows is currently being transferred to said storage device and setting said first show to said highest priority.

[c6]   6. The video recorder of claim 4 wherein said priority is established by determining if a first show of said one or more shows is scheduled for a manual transfer and setting said first show to said highest priority, if a remainder of said one or more shows are set for an automatic

transfer.

[c7] 7. The video recorder of claim 4 wherein said priority is established by determining if a first and a second of said one or more shows are a series and examining a series queue wherein a location of said first and said second of said shows determines said highest priority.

[c8] 8. The video recorder of claim 4 wherein said priority is established by determining if a first show of said one or more shows is a longer show and setting said first show to said highest priority.

[c9] 9. The video recorder of claim 3 wherein said conflict manager further determines if a first show of said one or more shows is available for transfer to said storage device at a later time and not transferring said first show to said storage device currently.

[c10] 10. The video recorder of claim 9 wherein it is determined if said first show is available for transfer at a later time by examining an interactive program guide (IPG), searching through said IPG to match a title of said one of said shows to a title of another instance of said first show later in said IPG.

[c11] 11. The video recorder of claim 2 wherein said user input instructs said transfer mechanism to repeatedly transfer

one or more shows in one or more series.

[c12]   12. The video recorder of claim 11 wherein said conflict manager further comprises determining if there is a conflict between a first and a second series and bumping one of said series having a lower priority.

[c13]   13. The video recorder of claim 11 wherein said conflict manager further comprises determining if one of said shows in one of said series is available for transfer at a later time and not transferring said one of said shows currently.

[c14]   14. The video recorder of claim 11 wherein said conflict manager further comprises determining if one of said shows in one of said series is a repeat and not transferring said one of said shows currently.

[c15]   15. The video recorder of claim 1 wherein said network connecting each of said video recorders is entirely within a single household.

[c16]   16. The video recorder of claim 1 wherein said network connecting each of said video recorders is distributed across one or more locations.

[c17]   17. A method for sharing tuners in a video recorder system, comprising: using one or more tuners in at least a

first and a second video recorder to utilize a broadcast signal; connecting said first and second video recorders in a network; determining when all of said one or more tuners in said first video recorder is unavailable; and using said network to access a connected tuner in said second video recorder if said connected tuner is available.

[c18] 18. The method of claim 17, comprising: receiving said broadcast signal; storing said broadcast signal in a storage device; displaying said broadcast signal by accessing said storage device; transferring said broadcast signal by obtaining a portion of said broadcast signal from said storage device at an appropriate time based on a user input; and managing conflicts by determining in advance when it will not be possible to obtain said portion of said broadcast signal and performing a conflict resolution process in response.

[c19] 19. The method of claim 18 wherein said step of managing conflicts further comprises: determining a number of tuners in said first video recorder; determining a number of shows that make up said portion of said broadcast signal, and determining if said number of tuners is smaller than said number of shows.

[c20] 20. The method of claim 19 wherein said conflict resolu-

tion process further comprises: establishing a priority for each of one or more of said shows; and transferring as many of said one or more shows as possible which have a highest priority.

[c21] 21. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of establishing further comprises: determining if one of said shows is currently being transferred to said storage device; and setting said one of said shows to said highest priority.

[c22] 22. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of establishing further comprises: determining if one of said shows is scheduled for a manual transfer; and setting said one of said one of said shows to said highest priority, if a remainder of said shows are set for an automatic transfer.

[c23] 23. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of establishing further comprises: determining if a first and a second of said shows is a series; and examining a series queue wherein a location of said first and said second of said shows determines said highest priority.

[c24] 24. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of establishing further comprises: determining if one of said shows is a longer show; and setting said one of said

shows to said highest priority.

[c25]   25. The method of claim 20 wherein said step of establishing further comprises: determining if one of said shows is available for transfer at a later time; and transferring said one of said shows at said later time, if available.

[c26]   26. The method of claim 25 wherein said step of determining further comprises: examining an interactive program guide (IPG); and searching through said IPG to match a title of said one of said shows to a title of another instance of said show later in said IPG.

[c27]   27. The method of claim 18 wherein said user input comprises giving an instruction to repeatedly transfer one or more shows in one or more series to said storage device.

[c28]   28. The method of claim 27 wherein said conflict resolution process further comprises: determining if there is a conflict between a first and a second series; and bumping one of said series having a lower priority.

[c29]   29. The method of claim 27 wherein said conflict resolution process further comprises: determining if one of said shows in one of said series is available for transferring at a later time; and transferring said one of said

shows at said later time, if available.

[c30] 30. The method of claim 27 wherein said conflict resolution process further comprises: determining if one of said shows in one of said series is a repeat; and transferring said one of said shows at a later time, if possible.

[c31] 31. The method of claim 17 wherein said network connecting each of said video recorders is entirely within a single household.

[c32] 32. The method of claim 17 wherein said network connecting each of said video recorders is distributed across one or more locations.

[c33] 33. The method of claim 17 wherein said step of using further comprises: detecting said second video recorder using said network; determining if said second video recorder has an available tuner ready; using said available tuner, if ready; detecting one or more other video recorders, if not ready; determining if any of said other video recorder has another available tuner ready; and using said another available tuner, if ready.